

3/28/2025

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

2025-77/7-4

To: Airport Manager, Ronald Reagan Washington National (DCA), VA, FAA 2212055  
(AAS-1, ATM DCA Tower, ATM PCT TRACON)

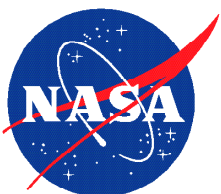
Info: FAA (AAS-300, AVP-1, AVP-200, AJV-A, AEA-600, AFS-260, AFS-200, Director of Air Traffic Operations ESA North, Runway Safety Team), A4A, AAAE, ALPA, AOPA, APA, ASAP, CAPA, ATSAP, ATSG, IATA, IBT, ICAO, ICASS, IFALPA, IPA, NATCA, NBAA, NTSB, RAA, SWAPA

From: Becky L. Hooey, Director  
NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System

Re: DCA ATC Operations Concerns

We recently received ASRS reports describing a safety concern that may involve your area of operational responsibility. We do not have sufficient details to assess either the factual accuracy or possible gravity of the report. It is our policy to relay the reported information to the appropriate authority for evaluation and any necessary follow-up. We feel you should be aware of the enclosed deidentified report.

To properly assess the usefulness of our alert message service, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to give us your feedback on the value of the information that we have provided. Please contact Dr. Becky Hooey at (408) 541-2854 or email at [becky.l.hooey@nasa.gov](mailto:becky.l.hooey@nasa.gov).



Aviation Safety Reporting System  
P.O. Box 189 | Moffett Field, CA | 94035-0189



## ACN 2212055

### DATE / TIME

Date of Occurrence 202502  
Local Time Of Day 0601 to 1200

### PLACE

Locale DCA.Airport  
State DC  
Altitude - MSL 1000

### AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT X

ATC / Advisory - Tower DCA  
Make Model Name Helicopter  
Operating Under FAR Part 91

### AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT Y

ATC / Advisory - Tower DCA  
Make Model Name Commercial Fixed Wing  
Operating Under FAR Part 121

### AIRCRAFT / EQUIPMENT Z

ATC / Advisory - Tower DCA  
Make Model Name Commercial Fixed Wing  
Operating Under FAR Part 121

### PERSON 1

Function - Air Traffic Control Local  
ASRS Report Number 2212055

### EVENTS

Anomaly ATC Issue - All Types  
Anomaly Deviation / Discrepancy - Procedural - Published  
Material / Policy  
Anomaly No Specific Anomaly Occurred - Unwanted Situation  
Detector - Person Air Traffic Control  
Result - Flight Crew Executed Go Around / Missed Approach  
Result - Air Traffic Control Separated Traffic

### NARRATIVE 1

DCA has been suspended from using Pilot Applied and Tower Applied Visual Separation per 7110.65AA. There is already a TFR and a NOTAM in place which are directly conflicting as they restrict different parts from helicopters in close proximity to the airport. The suspension of visual separation went into effect, introduced complexity while introducing risk to DCA and PCT TRACON.

Aircraft X was being held approximately 3 miles west of DCA as we are required to provide radar separation between helicopters and fixed wing aircraft in a Class B airspace (1.5 miles or 500 feet). Aircraft X reported that he was minimum fuel while waiting for a gap in the arrivals to be able to proceed back to DCA. Aircraft Y was roughly 3.5 miles south of the field on a visual approach and already cleared to land when I gave him go-around instructions to climb and maintain 3000 feet, turn left heading of 280 in accordance with DCA and PCT's LOA (Letter of Agreement) for go-around procedures. Aircraft Z was approximately 5 miles behind Aircraft Y on a visual approach, also already cleared to land when I also issued a go-around instruction to climb

and maintain 3000 feet. Coordination was done at the assistant Local Control position with the Final Controller who was already inundated with other arrivals behind Aircraft Z and an aircraft who was doing checks nearby only adding to the already complex and busy operation at PCT. I told Aircraft Z to continue with his present heading until further advised to not turn him directly towards the Aircraft Y and then issued Aircraft Z the 280 heading when he was already well above Aircraft X and past the point where he would be in direct conflict with Aircraft Y.

Recommendation: Allow controllers to use the tools that are prescribed within the 7110.65 as it is the way we are trained to work at a VFR Tower. We are being forced to use minimum radar separation rules while only having a Radar Qualification CBI (Computer Based Instruction) that I had years ago at a different VFR Tower that also had a different class of airspace.

## **SYNOPSIS**

DCA Tower Controller reported the suspension of visual separation and the use of minimum radar separation at DCA Airport has led to increased complexity, risk, and go-arounds for arrivals.